



## Introduction to “Hegel”

This is the Introduction to the first course for the SADTU Political Education Forum this year.

Why do we need this course on Hegel among the sixteen Communist University courses? Because the giant upon whose shoulders Marx and Engels stood was Hegel. From a pedagogical point of view, we must not flinch from the most difficult part of our studies. We must have it in sight, so that over time, if not at once, we will eventually master it.

Lenin wrote:

*“It is impossible completely to understand Marx's Capital, and especially its first chapter, without having thoroughly studied and understood the whole of Hegel's Logic. Consequently, half a century later none of the Marxists understood Marx!!”*

Hegel was born in 1770 and died in 1831. The highest period of “Hegelianism” was the ten years after Hegel’s death, between

1831 and 1841 – formative years for the young Karl Marx and Frederick Engels.

The period when “Hegelianism” was orthodox in Germany was followed by a turbulent contestation of philosophies, in which both Marx and Engels, as Hegelians, played prominent parts. The period of philosophical turmoil led up to the multiple revolutions of 1848.

Philosophy was, and still is, crucial, but it is lightly treated in the Marxist canon. Marx got his doctorate for philosophy, and all his writings are conditioned by that study, yet, after his doctoral thesis on Epicurus, he wrote no overt philosophy (although, as Lenin points out, Marx’s writing is saturated with Hegelian ideas). Engels did his best to fill the gap, but his philosophical output is scant in comparison to what is really needed.

The problem that Lenin pointed to, remains. It does not necessarily arise because the Marxists are lazy. It could also arise because:

- There is too little directly philosophical material within the Marxist canon
- Hegel’s work is comparable in volume to Marx’s, but is far more difficult to understand
- The “Logic” is even more difficult to understand than other parts of Hegel
- Hegel’s work is full of special terms that are not found in the same form anywhere else
- Such popularisation of Hegel’s work as exists, is more often than not, misleading

We need a study of Hegel to remedy some of the above problems.

### **Good Hegel, Bad Hegel**

Another difficulty is that although Hegel may have been the giant upon whose shoulders Marx was able to stand, yet Hegel was not Marx, and Hegel was prone to errors, as we (being Marx's successors) may see it. Hegel is (wrongly) accused of idealism, misogyny, and racism, to name only three such cardinal sins.

Consequently, any student of Hegel must hear and discriminate between the various criticisms, some of which are actively misleading.

### **Hegel Resources**

Andy Blunden's "[Hegel by Hypertext](#)" is the best and biggest easily-available collected resource. It includes a lot of Hegel's works and lots of helpful explanatory material, by others and by Andy himself.

Other resources include Marx's and Engels' writing on Hegel; Jon Stewart and James Heartfield to debunk myths about Hegel; Evald Ilyenkov for the relationship with Marx's work; and the existing CU course on Philosophy and Religion.

### **What do we want to get out of this course?**

After Capital, Volume 3, Hegel is the last frontier. There is nothing else that is more difficult, so everything else will be less difficult. Purely from a subjective, studying point of view, Hegel is the highest measure of what we have to achieve. Everything else in our political education will be, relatively speaking,

“downhill” from this point.

But in substance, Hegel is much more than that. For example, Andy Blunden, writing of Hegels’ motivation as a youth, says: *“Hegel drew the conclusion that the German Revolution would have to be made with philosophy rather than with guns and mobs.”*

To a great extent, as we have mentioned above, this is what came to pass. And it appears certain that our future revolution will also have to be made of philosophy. It will not be possible to have a revolution without first securing the philosophical front.

We are therefore looking to capture the salient features of Hegel’s work, because Hegel, Marx’s master, is still to this day the most advanced of philosophers in history.

These salient features will include a fundamental theory of human development (dialectics); a unified conception of human history; and a full theory of the individual and collective Subjects of History, with a consequent theory of Freedom. These prizes will be enough, for one course, if we can achieve them.

- **Image (above):** Alleged, possibly apocryphal, doodle of Hegel’s, showing a triad, found on the Internet. This may well be part of the misleading mythology around Hegel with which we must do battle.

The whole course can be downloaded in the form of PDF files, printable as booklets, from:

<http://studycircle.wikispaces.com/22+Hegel>